

A Case Study on Accessibility of School in Tribal Areas and Its Implications on Educational Inclusiveness

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Abstract

Schools accessibility has been areas of concern for the development and proliferation of the education system in any developing nation. India is no exception to the same. Since the time India gained independence efforts have been made to provide inclusiveness in the dissemination of educational facilities across the nation. However, geographical characteristics of the place and the lack of development of basic infrastructural facilities have often hindered the learner from coming to the learning centre (school). This case study is one such review of the role played by accessibility in increase of school attendance at two blocks of Betul district of Madhya Pradesh in central India. Similar topography and other factors are prominent in other parts of India so, the suggestions in the case study can be replicated in other areas as well.

Keywords: Education system, Accessibility, Scheduled Tribes, Community Participation.

1. Introduction

The Scheduled Tribes population represent one of the most economically impoverished and marginalised groups in India. More than 400 tribes notified under article 342 of the constitution of India, which are spread in different States and Union Territories in the country. The Schedule Tribes who have been historically out of the mainstream development initiatives partly due to the still continuing socio-economic barriers and partly due to the inadequacy of the government programmes in reaching these disadvantaged groups, still find themselves in difficult to compete with other sections of the society (Haseena et. al., 2014).

One of the distinguishing features of scheduled tribes is that the majority of them live in scattered habitations located in interior, remote and inaccessible hilly and forest areas of the country. Nearly 22% of tribal habitations have less than 100 population and more than 40% have 100 to 300 people (Sujatha,). The present paper is a part of study conducted to validate the information collected under Eighth All India School Education Survey (8th AISES). The study has been conducted with two objectives. So, two districts was selected for field visit considering with assumption that one objective will study for single districts. Out of other sample states selected for field visit, Madhya Pradesh is one of the sample and Betul district is one sub-sample.

In the state of Madhya Pradesh, the population of Schedule Tribes is 15.31 million as per census 2011. There are around 50 different identified tribes population in the state. This constitutes 21.1% of the total population. Madhya Pradesh holds first position among all the states/UTs in terms of scheduled tribes population. In comparison a population of 49,40,258 belonged to various scheduled tribes in Madhya Pradesh which was 13.57% of all India tribal population of 1971. The scheduled tribes population has reached 15,316,784 in 2011 with a growth of 210% in the four decades. The scheduled tribes population in rural areas was 98% in 1971 which has reduced to 935 in 2011 but the scheduled tribes population in urban areas has registered almost ten times increase between 1971 and 2011. Through this case study, an effort is made to explore some real facts of the accessibility and availability of education system in the tribal areas in the region.

2. Research Methodology

For the purpose of the research a case study methodology has been used. In the Case Study method a particular occurrence in a population, business, and place are analyzed. The main purpose of case study is to generate a deeper understanding through observation of the research subject matter in its accepted surrounding and comprehending its counter effects. The benefit of case study method is that it provides answers to-how, why and what questions (Saunders et al., 2003). The method is primarily based on three factors: reliability, duplicability and validity (Bryman and Bell, 2005; Yin, 1984). It is the choice of the researcher whether he wants to give generalized statements from the outcomes or create a unique context. In case study method generally comprise of both quantitative as well as qualitative methods to collect data (Saunders, Lewis, Thornhill 2003).

Yin (1984) has proposed 3 types of case study strategies:

- First, the *Critical Case*, wherein the purpose of the case is to analyse a theory.
- Second, the *Unique Case*, in which one develops a deeper understanding against outcomes and processes.
- Third, the *Informative Case*, where the function is to examine and analyze a phenomenon in order to generate some useful information for future study.

This research is of the kind of informative case where viable conclusions have been tried to be derived from the experience of the researchers. The research teams visited the site of reference for data collection and

observation details of which have been discussed as under. During the visit, the research team explored some areas outside the state boundary and some which are situated in dense forest areas. The field visit has been conducted in two blocks of Betul district of Madhya Pradesh. The visit has been conducted with concentrated on two objectives however Betul district was selected by considering second objective that is to explore the possible physical barriers being faced by the school going children to reach the schools. Total 14 habitations of 8 villages have been visited in view of objective.

3. Critical Observations

All habitations which are having primary stage schooling facility within a distance of 1 km however around 78% habitations are having upper primary education facility within a distance of 3 km. On the other hand, children from only 43% habitations can access facility of secondary stage within 5 km distance and children from only 26% habitations can access higher secondary stage education within 8 km distance from their habitations.

Excluding main habitation of the village, almost all rest habitations do not have easy accessibility. It means there is no proper *pucca* road to reach most of the habitations or to nearest habitations where basic facilities are available. There is no electric connection, no water supply, no transportation facility, no mobile network and other basic requirements are available in most of the habitations. People bring water from a long distance and their children help them in this work. (see picture 1)

The children of these habitations have to walk kilometers, they have to do ups and downs from hilly areas through very rough rocky path, they have to cross bridgeless river/streams during rainy season. Most of the days no schooling in rainy season because road becomes *kichad* road and neither children nor teacher are able to reach the school.

Since, secondary onward education facility available at a long distance from the habitations and these villages/habitations are located in forest tribal areas and some are situated on the hills, daily up and down for school is very difficult. If children get admission in Government Hostel or get private accommodation on sharing basis with other children at cheapest rate, then only parent allow them to continue their education. However, most of the parents not permitted their children especially to girl children, to stay outside the home alone. Some parents not affords to pay bus fare which gives 50% concession to the students (by the Government or State Transport Agency), as a result children go to the school by walk or drop out from the school especially after completion of elementary stage of schooling.

There are number of streams or small rivers on the way which become alive during rainy season and sometime changes into flood. Some streams have concrete low height bridge and some have damage bridges for example bridge whose only side wall is remains which is being use to cross the stream/river on the other hand some have without bridge. Crossing such streams/rivers during rain is full-of danger. (see picture 2) During these period, children from some habitations have travelled the distances through *Kuchcha* road which convert into *dal-dal* during rain.

Almost all parents in the habitations were goes to the farms to earn wages and left their children at home or some are migrated to other place for wages for 2 to 4 months along with their children. Therefore, some students brought their sibling with them in the class room. It is because parent goes early morning for wages. For care of their siblings, elder brother or sister brought their younger sibling in the class room with them, otherwise, they may forced to get drop-out. (see picture 3).

According to the Sarpanch of village, villagers, Block Resource Coordinators, every school has School Management Committee (SMC) and functioning very well. However, it is realized that on discussion with teachers of the schools in the visited habitation, some of teachers don't know about SMC and how it functioned.

Some villagers reported that the NCERT team is a first who visited their village since last 4-5 years. Even their MP/MLA/local leader not visited the village till date.

4. A True Story

Almost all girls are dropout after upper primary stage. Durga, Laxmi and Saraswati (name changed) are 3 friends, almost same age from a tribal village of Madhya Pradesh. Durga is dropout after primary education. Her father forced her to leave the school to help them to earn money by working in the farms. Saraswati, another girl leaved school after class 8 because her mother is expired and she has 3 siblings. Her father is a farm labour, went earlier morning and return in the late evening. Area is dry and without electricity. They have to bring water from a long distance which is around 2–4 km. therefore, to look after her sibling, she leaved the school. Laxmi is still studying and she is in class 7, because her father is bounded farm-labour for 5 years. There are many other girls, they have similar story.

5. Conclusion and suggestions for Action

- i. Accessibility is very important for schooling. If accessibility of schools is not proper, result may be drop out of the student. The local authority of the area needs to identify the local issues of the school, students and

- teachers. They can bring the important issues before School Management Committee (SMC) to find the solution. They can also inform higher authority for needful.
- ii. It is also suggested to increase the number of accommodation in the government hostels and also built new residential government secondary and higher secondary schools, especially for girls students, so they can easily accommodated in the hostel.
 - iii. To increase the community participation of the school, it is necessary to develop a relation between school, community and the government is very important. Community awareness and participation is very important to improve the strength and quality of the school.
 - iv. Like girl students, if state government or State Transport Authority can also allow 100% traveling concession to boy students for the schooling, this may reduce the rate of drop out in the rural areas.
 - v. Monitoring and supervision of schools as well as teachers should be performed on regular basis, without informing the schools, by the senior authority atleast in a month.

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7. References

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8. Pictures

Picture 1: Research Team going to school through kuchcha road and crossing a without bridge stream



Picture 2: Damage Bridge over a stream and school away about 1-1.5 km



Picture 3: Students brought their siblings in class room

